C. EVERARD PALMER

My Father,
Sun-Sun Johnson
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I WAS THERE WHEN THE BLOW FELL. And Father took it like a man.

Jake Hibbertson, who was the other big man in our village, the other besides Father, rode up in his car shortly before noon. He wasn’t driving. He had always done his own driving but today he had a chauffeur, Lorne Bakersfield, who ordinarily filled out a weekly work schedule by driving a truck or working around Jake’s farm. But today he was chauffeuring the car.

Alighting with haste, he opened the door for Jake who was seated big-shot like in the back seat. As he stepped out, Jake took a mighty long time to straighten himself out, looking around with pleased eyes as he did.

The Jaguar was purring nicely.

I had seen Jake climb from a battered Austin to a brand-new Humber Hawk and now he owned a Jaguar sedan, sleek and seemingly poised for speed. Unlike Jake, Father had gone backwards, climbing down from a car to a horse.

Today Jake was the personification of triumph. Although he was beaming happily, his eyes weren’t laughing. It was hard to like a man like him. His face was not only axe-shaped but he had a sick, washed-out colour. He didn’t look kind and he didn’t look cruel. He didn’t look anything. Lifting his pith helmet with a veined hand, he scratched his head as he surveyed our Robin Hill property.

Father was on the veranda. I was in the yard. Father was cool. He was leaning against one of the veranda posts, waiting for it.

Jake said, “How ya, Merton?”

“Hello, Jake,” Father said. “Nice day, eh?”

“Sunny and hot,” Father said. “Stifling. Come on in.”